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New York

Chairman: Mr. Sareva ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 62 to 80 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

Mr. Ivanov (Bulgaria): First, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to address this distinguished audience, and I would also like to congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, on your election to the Chair of the First Committee. I am confident that the abilities and long-standing disarmament experience that you and the other members of the Bureau are bringing to our discussion will steer the work of this body to a positive outcome.

At the beginning of our deliberations the distinguished representative of Italy made a statement on behalf of the European Union and its acceding and associated countries in which the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation were addressed in a comprehensive way. My delegation subscribes to that statement and fully concurs with the positions expressed therein, so I will confine my presentation today to issues of more specific interest to my country.

The new challenges posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction during the post-cold-war period have dramatically changed the global political and security environment. The risk of proliferation has been growing over the current year, threatening to undermine the existing non-proliferation regime and inflict serious damage on international peace and stability. The worst scenario of all might play out if terrorist groups obtained those weapons and put them to use with unpredictable consequences.

Providing a proper and resolute response to the new threats is a demanding task facing the international community and will require collaborative efforts that cut across international political divisions. It can be accomplished, however, provided we take a broad approach centred on a common understanding of the global threats and agreement on measures to further strengthen multilateral treaties and export control regimes. We must make effective use of all the tools at our disposal, especially non-proliferation and disarmament instruments, to ensure that each State party fully complies with its obligations under those treaties as well as under other related mechanisms. More strenuous efforts to universalize the non-proliferation norms should be coupled with practical steps at all levels to fulfil this highly important goal.

The General Assembly's First Committee has a prominent role to play in this endeavour. We believe that the methods and organization of work of the First Committee, as well as those of other non-proliferation and disarmament forums, need to be improved and further streamlined to adequately address the new challenges and political realities. At the same time, all proposed changes, and especially those relating to substantive issues, should be given careful and thorough consideration on the basis of constructive dialogue with all parties concerned. We must strive to

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ensure greater efficiency and credibility and further strengthen the multilateral approach. We must also enhance the integrity of major disarmament and non-proliferation treaties.

My country remains strongly committed to the efforts of the international community in preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and in minimizing the risk of terrorist entities obtaining access to those weapons. In that context, we observe that the introduction of rigid national export control standards on foreign trade in arms and dual-use goods and technologies is a growing trend. The improvement and enforcement of precisely tailored regulations in this field remains a high priority for the Bulgarian Government. As a result of the continuous improvements introduced over the past few years, the current Bulgarian export control system is already well designed to meet the most advanced European and international criteria. The control mechanisms enforced in Bulgaria strictly adhere to the requirements and restrictions imposed by Security Council resolutions, by decisions of the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Wassenaar Arrangement and other multilateral and regional instruments. Control lists imposed by Bulgaria effectively implement the Wassenaar Arrangement Munitions List in the field of arms trade, the unified and annually updated European Union list of dual-use goods and technologies and the lists of the Australia Group.

In line with its consistent policy and in the wake of the tragic events of 11 September 2001, the Government introduced additional measures aimed at enhancing existing export controls. In July 2002 the Bulgarian Parliament adopted amendments to the Law on the Control of Foreign Trade Activities in Arms and in Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, the core function of which is to establish an all-inclusive and coherent national approach to the implementation of Bulgaria's obligations under multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation instruments and export control mechanisms. Strengthened regulations are envisaged for arms brokers that will subject them to the same licensing procedure as producers and exporters. Further measures have also been put in place for the efficient enactment and implementation of the principles, criteria and restrictions contained in Security Council resolutions, relevant instruments of the European Union, the guidelines of the Wassenaar Arrangement and other international control and non-proliferation regimes.

The excessive accumulation and illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the major challenges to stability and development in many regions. The uncontrolled spread of small arms and light weapons intensifies existing ethnic and political tensions, causes casualties and human suffering and undermines the efforts of the international community for post-conflict rehabilitation and effective humanitarian assistance. My country participated actively in the debate on the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects at the July 2001 Conference held in New York, as well as in the First Biennial Meeting of States to Consider the Implementation of the Programme of Action held last July. We greatly appreciate the work done by the Security Council as the major United Nations body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security and, in particular, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (S/2002/1053) on the ways and means in which the Council could contribute to addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons.

At the national level, the Bulgarian Government took a special decision for the adoption of the Programme of Action and for the establishment of an inter-agency body to monitor its implementation. Bulgaria has submitted two detailed national reports, in 2002 and 2003, on the implementation of Programme of Action and is ready to cooperate closely with the Department for Disarmament Affairs in collecting data on the progress made by Member States in this respect. Furthermore, Bulgaria has contributed to the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Tracing Small Arms tasked with examining the feasibility of developing an international instrument that will enable States to identify and trace illicit small arms and light weapons in a timely and reliable manner. We are convinced that the positive outcome of the work of the Expert Group will foster the opening of negotiations for the development of a new instrument on marking and tracing of small arms and light weapons. We would welcome a decision in that respect by the present session of the General Assembly.

In 2002, Bulgaria completed the destruction of excessive quantities of small arms and light weapons — approximately 100,000 — as part of a joint

project with the United States Department of State and the United Nations Development Programme. Also last year, my country signed and ratified the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Those regional cooperation mechanisms are particularly well suited to address the grave problems associated with small arms and light weapons in a balanced and non-discriminatory manner.

Comprehensive political instruments, such as the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), have paved the way by establishing mutually acceptable norms and principles in the field of export control, thus building confidence, a greater sense of security and trust among regional partners.

Building upon the new spirit of cooperation, Bulgaria recently initiated a number of efforts at the regional and subregional levels. We were also pleased to host the European Union Troika meeting with the associated countries in April 2002, which contributed to the success of the subsequently held seminar on conventional arms exports, policies and control. To help raise awareness of socio-economic incentives related to the negative impact of small arms and light weapons, in November 2002 Bulgaria hosted a preparatory seminar for the OSCE Economic Forum on the economic aspects of small arms trafficking. Moreover, the prospects and mechanisms for further strengthening of the export control system were recently discussed at yet another regional forum, convened in Sofia. The issues of regional security and arms control will continue to be the focus of our attention during Bulgaria's chairmanship of OSCE in 2004.

In the less than two years since ratification, Bulgaria has completed its basic obligations under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Landmines and on Their Destruction by clearing all its minefields and entirely destroying its stockpiles of anti-personnel mines. Over the past year, we have worked strenuously to help transform the region of South-Eastern Europe into a zone free of anti-personnel mines. In that vein, I should like to recall that, in 1998, we proposed to the countries of our region a political commitment not to use anti-personnel mines or to deploy them in areas adjacent to their common borders. We are pleased that the agreement between the Governments of Bulgaria and Turkey, which emanates from and virtually embodies that idea, entered into force last year. In the same vein, we welcome the decision of our neighbours Greece and Turkey to accede to the Convention.

During the Second Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, Bulgaria supported all constructive contributions aimed at enhancing the humanitarian effects of that important instrument. Recognizing the extended scope of application of the Convention as a step forward in its strengthening, we ratified its amended article 1 in February this year.

We strongly support the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on Explosive Remnants of War and Mines Other Than Anti-Personnel Mines as a first step towards addressing issues that are causing needless suffering in regions emerging from conflict. With a view to promoting dialogue and cooperation on those serious problems, my country has assumed the role of coordinator on mines other than anti-personnel mines.

In conclusion, I should like to express my delegation's hope that the spirit of cooperation and partnership will guide our discussion towards tangible and productive results.

Mr. Alexandre (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): Permit me at the outset to express, on behalf of my delegation, our warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of this important Committee. Those congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau. You can be assured of our full cooperation. I should also like to take this opportunity to welcome Mr. Nobuyasu Abe, new Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. In addition, I thank his predecessor, Mr. Dhanapala, for his 66 months of service at the helm of the Department.

My delegation subscribes fully to the statement made on 9 November by the representative of the Bahamas, speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community, of which Haiti is a member. Without wishing to needlessly prolong this debate, we should like at least to stress a number of very specific points on the policy and approach of our Government.

My delegation continues to wonder about the point of increasing the number of international conferences if the relevant commitments stemming from them are not respected. We continue to wonder why the possession of weapons of mass destruction remains the prerogative of certain States. In terms of security guarantees and the protection of the planet — our common heritage — would it not make more sense to carry out their complete elimination as soon as possible? And why this inequality in the international system?

My delegation, as so many others have done, would like to appeal urgently to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has indicated its intention to withdraw from the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the pillar of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. We also wish to encourage the Islamic Republic of Iran to support the efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and thereby regain the trust of the international community.

However, Haiti also urges the nuclear-weapon States to work for the total elimination of such devices, as agreed by the States parties themselves during the 2000 NPT Review Conference. My country cannot endorse a policy of double standards in which it is admissible for some to keep and improve their nuclear weapons, while others must rid themselves of such weapons or not even think about the production, possession or presence of such weapons on their territory.

Any nuclear disarmament policy, in order to be reliable, must involve abandonment of the policy of deterrence and the doctrine of force. The elimination of such weapons is the only guarantee against their use or the threat of their use. It is not enough to promise to the international community not to use them first in a possible conflict. Along those lines, my delegation pleads once again for implementation of the 13 measures adopted in 2000 at the NPT Review Conference and invites States to demonstrate the political will to meet their obligations.

The barbaric act of 11 September 2001 that struck the United States and took more than 3,000 lives brought together the peoples of the whole world on a common battlefield, where they were going to fight together a common enemy — terrorism. However, it is sad to note that multilateralism — cornerstone of the preservation of international peace and security — is in a complete crisis today. The zeal of the common vision of collective security that inspired us in San Francisco must not give way to other doctrines that could divide us.

During the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the First Committee is meeting at a time when many events are disturbing the calm of the international scene. The importance of the United Nations is being questioned; international legal instruments are not being respected; weapons expenditures have risen by $794 million; hotbeds of tension are becoming explosive; and terrorism is striking harder without any regard for nationality, status, religion, sex or age.

It is therefore deplorable to note that, despite so many challenges and obstacles to the cause of disarmament and international security, nothing seems pressing. Among many other things, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) has yet to enter into force — 12 ratifications are still necessary for that to happen — the NPT has not yet become universal; the Conference on Disarmament, a unique multilateral body for disarmament negotiations, has still not reached agreement on its programme of work; and the Treaty of Pelindaba, aimed at making Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone, has still not entered into force.

It is not that we wish to paint a grim picture of the current situation and thereby minimize the various initiatives undertaken in the disarmament field. But, apart from the ratification of the Moscow Agreement between the United States and the Russian Federation, it must be recognized that there have been no major positive developments. What, then, has happened to our sense of urgency?

Whatever the case, my delegation welcomes the establishment of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which has made the Latin American and Caribbean region a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We have also noted with satisfaction Cuba's signature, on 18 September in Vienna, of the guarantee agreements and the Additional Protocol with the IAEA, in conformity with its contractual obligations as a State party to the Treaty. That ratification, which consolidates the status of Latin America and the Caribbean, will be officially celebrated at the 18th session of the General Conference of the Agency for the Prohibition of

Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), to be held in Havana from 5 to 6 November.

In that regard, my delegation commends Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Algeria for having recently ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We take this opportunity to encourage other States that have not yet done so to proceed with this process.

My Government attaches great importance to the elimination of chemical, biological and toxin weapons. It views with satisfaction the positive record put forward by the Director-General of the Organization on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in his presentation to the Committee on 7 October.

We hope that the First Review Conference of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which took place from 28 April to 9 May in The Hague, will bear fruit, leading to the universality of the Convention and its implementation.

With respect to the Biological Weapons Convention, Haiti urges the establishment of a verification protocol and the development of an international legal instrument.

My delegation would be remiss if it did not commend the success of the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel mines, which now has 136 States parties. Timetables for the destruction of stockpiles have been respected. The number of accidents related to landmines has considerably decreased, and Afghanistan and Angola have adhered to the Convention. These are all important steps worthy of being underscored as they show the political will of States in this regard.

On the occasion of last July's first biennial conference two years after the adoption of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons, convened to assess the Programme's implementation, my Government expressed its profound concern at this scourge and communicated its own plan of action for the collection and destruction of these weapons. My delegation is pleased at the outcome of the first biennial meeting. Once again, we reiterate our Government's commitment to cooperate fully with the international community.

Given that 60 persons per hour are killed by small arms and light weapons and 500 million such weapons are in circulation, we certainly cannot remain indifferent. In accordance with the report of the Group of Experts on this question, my delegation will support initiatives for the marking, registration and tracing of these weapons, whose proliferation contributes to crime and the political, social and economic destabilization of our societies. Genuine peace cannot be reduced to purely military concepts. It can be built only on mutual confidence.

Mr. Beddel Mohamed (Somalia): Allow me, Sir, to extend our congratulations to you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. The Somali delegation assures you of its full cooperation in the conduct of your responsibilities. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation for the excellent manner in which your predecessor, Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka of Uganda, conducted the deliberations of the Committee last year. We welcome the new Under-Secretary-General for disarmament, Ambassador Abe, and wish him a successful term.

The present session of the First Committee is an occasion to reflect on serious challenges to international peace and security and the related crisis on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. The manifestation of this crisis presents a common challenge to all of us: the threat to international peace and security, disarmament, arms control, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the prospect of biological and chemical weapons falling into the hands of terrorists and the problem of small arms and light weapons.

Somalia believes that disarmament benefits mankind because it eliminates threats to peace and security. We believe that the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) are viable options for complete and universal disarmament. We also support resumption of the Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention and hope that it will be able to reach a final agreement. The destruction of conventional weapons and the ratification of the Ottawa landmines treaty are critical and important, as well.

While discussions in the First Committee focused on weapons of mass destruction and terrorism, it is inevitable to recall the millions of illicit small arms and light weapons across the globe. The illicit trafficking of

small arms and light weapons and their uncontrolled spread have a direct negative impact on peace, security and opportunities for a sustainable development in many African countries.

Wars, conflict and violence can be stopped only if the everyday incentives to ignite these fires are removed. I would like to stress that the cause that brings us together today goes far beyond weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. Through our discussions, we must keep in full view the primacy of people, communities and their aspirations for a better life — all are threatened by the availability of small arms and light weapons.

In my country, the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons is an obstacle to improving the lives of Somalis. The widespread availability of illicit weapons creates security risks and sows the seeds of violence.

A classic example of this scourge is the recent killing of Mrs. Annalena Tonelli, a 60-year-old Italian humanitarian worker who spent 33 years working in my country. She was killed by a lone gunman on 5 October while she visited a tuberculosis hospital in north-east Somalia. Mrs. Tonelli set up clinics in Somalia to fight tuberculosis and raised awareness about the harmful effects of female circumcision and HIV/AIDS. Earlier this year, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees awarded her the 2003 Nansen Refugee Award for her work. The people and Government of Somalia send our heart-felt condolences to the family of Mrs. Tonelli. We share their pain and suffering, and we assure them that we will bring those who committed that heinous crime to justice.

Another problem related to small arms and light weapons concerns the signing of the cessation of hostilities by the Transitional National Government and faction leaders as part of the Eldoret declaration of cessation of hostilities on 27 October 2002 at the Somali reconciliation conference in Kenya. It was adopted by all parties, and the African Union has put in place a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement. Military observers were dispatched to Somalia, and missions have been sent into the country to assess the feasibility of a military deployment. However, within 48 hours of signing this agreement, inter-factional fighting erupted, which led the demise of the agreement.

The third and final example is the continued and flagrant violation for more than 12 years of the arms embargo imposed on Somalia by the Security Council. Small arms and light weapons supplied by external sources continue to flow into and through Somalia. That inflow of weapons is not only a threat to peace and security in Somalia but also a violation of Security Council resolution 751 (1992) concerning the arms embargo on Somalia.

The killing of Mrs. Tonelli and the violations of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and the arms embargo are the result of millions of available illicit small arms and light weapons found in the hands of faction leaders and their militias.

The destruction of weapons is critical in Somalia. But that alone cannot solve the problem. A child soldier may be ready to give up his or her gun only if jobs are available. Therefore, specific projects aimed at reducing the availability of those arms must be an element integrated into comprehensive development strategies. Otherwise, they will be hindered by high levels of insecurity and violence.

Such projects should include weapons collections, confidence-building measures and incentives to encourage the voluntary surrender of small arms and light weapons and their quick and effective destruction. Particular attention should be given to the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of militias. An encouraging start has to be made by understanding the crucial role of awareness and by discouraging the culture of violence created by small arms and light weapons, which further jeopardizes the development process in my country. Enhancing civil society participation through public education and awareness programmes about the problems of small arms and light weapons is critical and important.

Somalia would like to stress that building partnerships to address international peace and security is essential. It recognizes the role of all stakeholders in the fight against the proliferation of all weapons. But we believe that special attention should be given to the problem of small arms and light weapons. A comprehensive approach to the assistance programme on curbing all small arms and light weapons is greatly needed.

Somalia requests assistance through technical and financial support in the implementation process of the

United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

We are deeply concerned about the serious financial constraints that handicap the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants as well as weapons collection and destruction. Weapons collection and destruction reduces the number of illicit small arms and prevents them from being sold on the market or falling into the hands of terrorists. The financial resources available to Somalia are far too limited to cope with the magnitude of the problem that Somalia is intended to solve.

I wish to call upon development partners to come forward and assist Somalia in ensuring their dream of eradicating this menace. Such assistance can be channelled to the Somali Government directly through bilateral arrangements or through United Nations and regional organizations. We therefore urge special attention to be given to Somalia in terms of adequate funding for disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration, to enable us to carry out activities relating to international peace and security.

The Chairman: The Committee has now heard the last speaker inscribed on the list of speakers for this afternoon's meeting and has therefore concluded its general debate on all disarmament and related international security agenda items.

Distinguished delegates, in accordance with the Committee's programme of work and the timetable, the First Committee will embark on the second phase of its work, namely the thematic discussion on item subjects as well as the introduction and consideration of all draft resolutions under all disarmament and international security agenda items — items 62 to 80 — starting Monday, 20 October.

However, before we proceed to the second phase of our work, as you are all aware, I had planned to utilize the remaining time allocated to the Committee today and, if need be, tomorrow, to conduct an informal exchange of views on ways to improve the working methods of the First Committee.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.